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Church In The World

CATHOLIC CHURCH MUST LEAD THE WAY IN SOLVING EAST TIMOR'S PROBLEMS

JAKARTA – The Church must lead the way in solving the problems of predominantly Catholic East Timor, concluded the pronuncio to Indonesia after completing his first pastoral visit to the former Portuguese colony.

East Timorese should put the past behind them and look to the future, Archbishop' Peitro Sambi told UCA News after his April 22-28 pastoral visit.

Violence, hatred, and disparity are contrary to the Gospel and will not lead to a better future, he said.

Disparate groups in East Timor should make an effort for reciprocal understanding, the archbishop said. Those taking these steps are on the way to creating a better future, he added.

The pope's representative said he was impressed by the spiritual, cultural and economic service the Church provides the people of East Timor, adding that Church presence in this service can lead to "integration with dignity."

The state and the Church both aim to foster the common good, the pronuncio said. Therefore, they should collaborate for the welfare of East Timorese.

Unemployment is a serious problem in East Timor, and that is why creating employment opportunities for youth is an essential aspect of improving East Timor's situation, he said.

"There is nothing more dangerous than to leave the youth without open doors, without hope for the future," he said.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi

He suggested that people who are interested in Dili should focus on this particular problem, since leaving youth without work is to abandon them to people who will manipulate them.

He cited the Salesian vocational school at Fatumaca that trains young people in modern technology.

During the visit he was also impressed with the local minor seminary and Dili's Pastoral Institute that prepares future Catholic teachers.

These institutes, he said, will strengthen Church presence in key elements of East Timor's society, such as the formation of youth, solidarity of Christian family life, and the laity's responsibility to bring Christian values into daily life.

The pronuncio voiced concern that some Catholic gatherings and worship services took on a political tone, and urged Catholics to avoid this.

Generally, East Timor Catholics do not use churches for political aims, Archbishop Sambi said. "But there are some small groups taking opportunity of this religious aspect to manifest their political attitude."

Frequently after expressing their political views, these people run away, leaving many problems for those who went to Church only to pray, he said.

The archbishop said East Timorese Catholics find themselves in a new situation brought on by an influx of non-Catholics.

"I can understand that (Catholics) are not used to seeing Protestants and Muslims. But their attitude should be 'catholic' which, consists of mutual respect for all religions in the world," Archbishop Sambi said.

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CAN SAYS

In the 60s and 70s, new religious movements sprang up like mushrooms. In the beginning, it was thought that they were harmless to society. But soon, people realized that they have become a threat to society especially to established religions. Their fundamentalist approach has caused harm to people who do not believe in their own faith. One group after another proclaimed that each group has the only truth. They, therefore, condemn all other religions and religious groups, even of their own kind. Yet, a good number of people, especially the young, are lured into these movements. The problem has become so serious that the Vatican has carried out a world-wide survey on these cults.

These religious movements can be classified into three main categories: (a) the Pseudo-Christian groups, (b) the Eastern Mysticism derivatives and (c) the Human Potential Movements. Among the Pseudo-Christian groups, the better known ones are "Children of God," "Church of the Living Word (also called The Walk)," "Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT)," "The Holy Order of Mans," "Scientology," "Unification Church," "The Way International" and "World-Wide Church of God." Under the Eastern Mysticism derivatives there are "Divine Light Mission (DLM)," "Hare Krishna," and "Mahikari." The Human Potential Movements embrace movements like "The Forum," "Silva Mind Control" and "Transcendental Meditation." Of course, there are numerous others. To list them all would take pages.

Outside of these three categories is the "New Age Movement." Rev. Wm. Kent Burtner, O.P. summarizes it in the following way:

"A conflation of a variety of non-traditional religious organizations, self-help programs, modern witches, large-group awareness trainings and esoteric satanist groups, New Age expressions are poorly co-ordinated and differ widely from each other. Despite their differences, however, they share some common ideologies and behavioural manifestations that allow us to talk about them as a whole."

One of the trade marks of these groups is a mentality of fundamentalism.

Three characteristic elements of the control system of these cults can be found: the use of deception; the suspension of the candidate's analytical faculties; the assumption of control over the candidate's guilt and fear, which terminates in the repression of those thoughts and emotions which the group perceives as inimical.

What in these cultist movements makes them so attractive to young people especially? The main attractions are the following components: they give the candidates a sense of "security" even if it is false; they promise a type of "utopianism"; they give the candidates a sense of being at home, of belonging, through friendly and warm interaction; they promise "healing" through the use of different psychological techniques which often allow candidates to vent their pent up emotions.

The above components of attraction are linked to the problems of society in the world. We live in a world where the threat of bloody clashes is real, especially when we see so many countries torn with hatred and war. The menace of mass destruction looms large in our imagination. This insecurity is further enhanced by the experience of impermanence: technological changes occur at such a fast speed that what is in vogue today will be out of fashion in a few months' time. Modern life is so competitive that we experience more hostility and indifference than friendliness and care. It is also because of modern living that our children are often neglected. The tension between spouses rubs off onto children who grow up with emotional bruises and wounds which "cry out" to be healed.

Why cannot our Church respond to these needs of our children? Surely we have all that is necessary to create an atmosphere of warm friendliness? We have the sacraments for healing people. Are we making use of them properly? The Church's preaching of the salvation offered by Christ to us all should give our youth a sense of security. If our children do not experience security, it is our fault and not the message of J. Christ.

There is only one conclusion from all this – our children have not received the true faith which gives them the experience of security which comes from the love of God that expresses itself in brotherly/sisterly care and concern, and hence, of healing.

The faith that we have communicated to our children has been shallow. It consists of fulfilling the obligations of our religion. It has not led our children to an experience of faith in Jesus Christ in such a way that they feel loved and are therefore able to love others as Christ loves them.

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OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE!

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